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Iterative "Αν"

Of course, it is ideally possible for a single phrase to bear two meanings, so diverse as to seem, at times, diametrically opposed. Lovers of punning, and of word-play in general, hunt for such things, and not in vain. Sometimes the two notions are really but remote links of a single chain. Thus "Look out!" may indeed be the invitation to put one's head out of the car window, for the view, or to draw it in again, for safety: yet both derive without break from the main idea, Keep your eyes open.

A professorial landlord, dunning for rent, once thought a personal assault doubly atrocious, because the good wife had assured him that, if he would wait a bit till her husband came in, the latter "wouldn't do a thing to him". Here the delicate irony should have appealed to the student of classic tragedy. It is a favorite figure of colloquial speech.

Again, a perverse accident, a drifting collision, may have made confusion. To "raise" a barn is to put up the frame; to "rase" it is to pull it down again. If our spelling were fonetically—or fanatically—rational, we might be trying to link these two notions, as vainly as each child tries to see kinship, in form or function, between an "ear" of maize or barley, and his own auricular organ: until, perchance, the German Ohr and Aehre enlighten him.

But these things are the defects, the accidents, of speech, tolerated in dusty corners, or played with in idle moments. Language was not really devised by diplomatists, to conceal our actual opinion. If an idiom is an

indispensable or highly convenient one, the ambiguity must be escaped by some variation of form. Sometimes the line of division runs in a curiously illogical place. Thus, -ly is but -like, and should not produce unlikeness. Yet a boy of seven, conning his school history, soon learns that if he reads: "The British were apparently retiring from the field", then appearances are pretty regularly deceitful; but if "the meaning of the movement was now apparent", then the mystery is to be considered as rightly and fully solved. The use of *φαίνεται* with infinitive or participle is a close parallel here: *φαίνεται οὐ παρών*, he is evidently not present, *φαίνεται μὴ παρῆναι*, he seems not to be present, but is he?

But *ἄν* is the chief modal adverb in the most flexible of languages: the aorist indicative is the most recurrent of verb-forms: the question of reality and unreality is the very essence of all utterance: and yet we are bidden to believe that *ἐπαίσειν ἄν* means "Klearchus hit a man, many a time", and also to bear in mind that the very same words, on their next occurrence, may clearly imply that he didn't hit one at all! If these things could be true, language would be no fit stuff for scientific study. It is to offer a more cheerful solution that this leaf is flung.

It seems clear, that whether identical or not with the Latin *an*, *ἄν* has but one origin, tho' the vanishing of *κε* may have somewhat overburdened the little word. The probable root-meaning may perhaps be best indicated, roughly, by *wesentlich*, *eigentlich*, *natürlich*—*i e*, in the natural, regular, or normal course of things. Hence it always takes the verb out of the sphere of simple reality, of actual occurrence, into that "modal" realm, that ideal sphere, perhaps best known as *characterization*.

The familiar case in question is a particularly clear one. Xenophon is not speaking or thinking of an actual soldier in the line at all: he is outlining—*i e*, *characterizing*—the grim picturesque figure of the dreaded, trusted, successful condottiere himself. Klearchus was certainly quite capable of flogging his own

men who shirked. We chance to know, from another chapter, that he had even flogged Menon's man, after scant investigation. Other instances may well have been known to Xenophon. But the purely ideal tone of the present statement is duly emphasized (if I remember it aright, a hundred miles from a Teubner text) by an optative in the conditioning clause, *εἰ τινα ἴδοι βλακεύοντα*.

But, it will be said, surely there are plenty of passages where *ἔπαισεν ἄν*, or its equivalent, is "contrary to the fact". Of course there are. But there are no passages where this combination in itself expresses anything of the kind. The unreality is always either known already to an attentive reader, or comes out later from the context. Furthermore, it has been often noted, that even in the complete conditional form it is the protasis, not necessarily the conclusion, that is unreal: *ε γ, εἰ καὶ πτέρυγας εἶχον ἀνδρῶποι ἄν ἦμεν*.

We are on the edge of the great distinction between Attic and the more artificial modern languages. *Our* phrases are elaborate formulae, overloaded, through long association, with all sorts of implied connotations. Thus, if you ask a German maid for a kiss, before the formal engagement, and she answers "*Natürlich* thun wir das nicht", you should clearly hear the refusal: while "*Eigentlich* thun wir das nicht" brings a coy but clear consent to make this one exception to the wise rule.—Und doch, eigentlich sind diese zwei Adverbien natürlich so gut wie gleichbedeutend.

"*ἔπαισεν ἄν* implies nothing, real or unreal. It says directly, that Klearchus, when alive, was just the man to smite a shirk, without hesitation. We all know men whom we would so characterize, and yet, as to some of them, we cannot swear they actually ever struck a blow.

Wherever we meet *ἔπαισεν ἄν* next, it will imply nothing: it will state—not the actual but—the natural sequence of certain past events. The context, however, if decently written, will make perfectly clear, whether the order of nature was followed or, exceptionally, violated. Of course, the latter is the commoner, statistically. When we remark, "The proper course was to send the boy to the principal's office", we are oftener than not complaining because the proprieties were violated in the particular case. A law is solemnly stated, as a rule, because it has been broken, not because it has been observed. That is merely an axiom of human action. But that doesn't mean at all, in Greek, "the unreal force of *ἄν* is commoner

than the gnomic use". "*ἄν* itself is never unreal, never gnomic. If the context does not attend to those matters, the ambiguity will remain insoluble. There is but one *ἄν*, and one use of it with the aorist indicative, viz, to state what was to be expected, in the natural course of things, in a given contingency.

And all this illustrates a still larger condition. A fresh living speech, like fifth century Attic, has not settled into rigid formulae with elaborate connected meanings. Hardly any combination of words is as yet fixed. The radical notion of each word, usually something visible or physical, is still felt, only less directly than in the Homeric age. Syntax is not yet a matter of fixed law. The language is so to speak semasiologically agglutinative. That is, the meaning of each word is still very simple and rudimentary:—*κατά*, always *dowyn*, *διά*, always *through*: *τρόπαιον*, you still hear *τρέπω*, and see the tug of war, the wavering line,—and just enough words are used to hedge in, or rather to stake off, the speaker's meaning. He addresses, however, a rational, sympathetic, alert listener, who is himself grasping the whole context, in an eager effort to seize promptly upon the exact idea conveyed. Everything is omitted, or stated most curtly, which such a reader or hearer can supply for himself. Hence the language is by no means a full logical expression of thought. Occasionally it is more like a conventional system of shorthand. But essentials are distinguished. The same sign is not used for yes and no.

WM C LAWTON

Beaver College, Silver Bay, Lake George,
Sept 1, 1901

We are not able to announce the time, place and subject of Professor Peck's address before the next meeting of The New York Latin Club, as we have not yet heard from Professor Peck. We hope to be able to supply this information in our next issue.

New Scholarship and Leaflet Patrons

We have pleasure in announcing as SCHOLARSHIP PATRONS: Mr G M Davison, teacher of Latin in the Eastern District High School, Brooklyn, and Dr R Arrowsmith of The American Book Company; and as LEAFLET PATRONS: Mr W T Chapin of The American Book Company; Dr C H Leete of the Sachs School for Girls, New York; Mr J H Keener of Lawrenceville, N J; Miss Ellen C Bartlett of Putnam Hall, Poughkeepsie, N Y.